

Division of Consumer Affairs

## News Release

### **HEALTH CLUBS: WHAT TO LOOK FOR, WHAT TO AVOID**

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

June 12, 1997

From the Tennessee Division of Consumer Affairs

As summer approaches, many people peel off their sweaters and jackets and prepare for the sunny days ahead. Resolutions are established to make ourselves more attractive and healthier for the activities of summer. The focus of many turns from winter hibernation to summer fitness.

With this in mind, many will seek a health club membership hoping to take off the extra pounds and put on a healthier lifestyle. These clubs come alive offering special programming with reduced rates. New health clubs as well as existing ones offer unbelievable deals if people join today. According to Mark Williams, Director of the Division of Consumer Affairs, "many clubs offer special membership rates including two for one pricing, exclusive financing, and discounted lifetime membership programs. Many of these promotions violate the Health Club Act."

- Avoid paying in advance for these long-term programs. "Within the last few months, a dozen health clubs went out of business leaving thousands of members stranded," said Williams.

As a consumer about to invest hundreds or thousands of dollars in your health, here are some guidelines to keep in mind.

- Make sure the health club you want to join is registered. All for profit health clubs are required to be registered with the Tennessee Division of Consumer Affairs and must display a Certificate of Registration. If in doubt, contact the Division and see if the club is registered.
- Call the Tennessee Division of Consumer Affairs to ask if there have been complaints filed against the health club in which you are interested.
- Be aware that you have three days to cancel a health club contract and receive a full refund of monies invested. You are required to notify the health club by certified mail if you decide to cancel.
- Avoid paying in advance for long-term memberships. If you pay for your membership in advance, you may lose your money if the health club goes out of business before your contract expires.
- Be skeptical of any offers of a discounted rate and free time if you join today.
- Be cautious if you have to sign the contract today. Be alert when faced with high pressure sales tactics.

- Be wary of signing long-term contracts. You are responsible for paying the cost of the full term membership even if you decide to drop out after a few visits. Also, be aware of any cancellation fees. Always read the entire contract before you sign.

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